

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
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O R 021415Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7708
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION NATO
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
EUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 4241

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MORG, TU
SUBJ: TURKIS ARMY COMMANDER RETIRES

1. TURKISH RADIO NEWS EVENING JUNE 1 CARRIED A TURKISH
GENERAL STAFF (TGS) ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AMRY COMMANDER, GENERAL
NAMIK KEMAL ERSUN HAD RETIRED FROM THE ARMY. THE ANNOUNCEMENT
DID NOT GIVE ANY EXPLANATION AS TO REASON FOR ERSUN'S
RETIREMENT NOR DID IT INDICATE WHETHER HIS RETIREMENT HAD BEEN
AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE.

2. COMMENT: ERSUN'S RETIREMENT AT THIS TIME IS A SURPRISE. HE HAS
FOR SEVERAL YEARS BEEN RUMORED TO BE IN POOR HEALTH, BUT THIS
SUPPOSED INFIRMITY HAS NOT IN THE PAST AFFECTED HIS
ASSIGNMENT PATTERN. ERSUN REACHED RETIREMENT AGE THIS YEAR
AND IF HE HAD NOT BEEN APPOINTED ARMY COMMANDER IN 1976, HE
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WOULD HAVE BEEN RETIRED ON AUGUST 30, 1977. HOWEVER, INCUMBENT
FORCE COMMANDERS CAN BE EXTENDED FOR AN EXTRA YEAR BEYOND
NORMAL RETIREMENT AGE. THEREFORE, IF ERSUN HAD NOT RETIRED
JUNE 1, HE COULD HAVE REMAINED ON ACTIVE DUTY ANOTHER
YEAR AND SUCCEEDED TGS CHIEF SEMIH SANCAR WHEN THE LATTER RETIRES IN
MARCH 1978.

3. THE MOST IMPORTANT IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF ERSUN'S RETIREMENT IS THAT FIRST ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL ADNAN ERSOZ, THE RANKING ARMY OFFICER AFTER ERSUN, WILL PROBABLY BE NAMED ARMY COMMANDER, WILL THUS BE EXEMPT FROM RETIREMENT AT THE END OF THIS AUGUST, AND WILL BECOME THE MOST LIKELY CANDIDATE FOR SUCCESSOR TO SANCAR.

4. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR ERSUN'S RETIREMENT ARE NUMEROUS--THE MOST SIMPLE BEING THAT HE, IN FACT, IS ILL ALTHOUGH HE APPEARED IN PUBLIC JUNE 1 AND SEEMED IN GOOD HEALTH. MOST OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS INVOLVE INTERNAL ARMY POLITICS. HOWEVER, THE TIMEING OF THE ACTION -- FOUR DAYS BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS--HAS GIVEN RISE TO SPECULATION THAT IT IS SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH THOSE ELECTIONS. WHIEL WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT SUCH SPECULATION, THE TIMING OF THE RETIREMENT DOES RAISE QUESTIONS.
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